Former Kennedy Aide Suggests Panel to Check Warren Report

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By EDITH EVANS ASBURY

A former aide to President Kennedy suggested yesterday that an independent group look into charges that the Warren Commission's investigation of the assassination was inadequate.

Richard N. Goodwin, speech writer, trouble-shooter and adviser to President Kennedy, suggested that a small panel of experts first check the report.

If they find it inadequate, a larger panel should re-evaluate the findings and seek new evidence, Mr. Goodwin said.

Mr. Goodwin is the first member of the late President's inner circle to suggest publicly that an official re-examination be made of the Warren report.

'Demands Answers'

He makes his proposals in a review of "Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth," written by Edward Jay Epstein and published by Viking. The book "not only raises questions but demands explorations and answers," Mr. Goodwin says in "Book Week," published today.

Mr. Goodwin said yesterday in a telephone interview that he believed an investigation should be conducted by persons who had no connection with public life.

"People like the dean of Yale or Harvard Law School, or a retired judge, or former employe of the Justice Department," he explained.

"They should be people so independent of public life that they can undertake the very delicate task of perhaps having to criticize those appointed by the President to conduct the previous investigation."

Mr. Goodwin remained at the White House until September of 1965, when he became a fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies at Wesleyan University. He had been associated with President Kennedy since 1959.

Mr. Epstein, a Harvard doctoral candidate, undertook his study of the Warren Commission report as a master's thesis at Cornell.

In his book, he says he found the Warren report hastily prepared, superficial and inaccurate.

Mr. Epstein concludes that the report did not prove Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in the assassination or that one of the bullets that struck Mr. Kennedy also wounded Gov. John B. Connally of Texas.

Further Investigation

Further investigation may reinforce the Warren Commission's findings, Mr. Goodwin concedes. But he states in his review that if Mr. Epstein "is right that the investigation itself was seriously incomplete, then we have not established to the limit of possibility that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone to kill John F. Kennedy."

Mr. Goodwin continues:

"I find it hard to believe that the investigation was seriously flawed. But here is a book which presents such a case with a logic and a subdued and reasonable tone which have already disturbed the convictions of many responsible men.

"It may all rest on quicksand, but we will not know that until we make an even more extensive examination than the author has made.

"An independent group should look at these charges and determine whether the commission investigation was so defective that another inquiry is necessary.

"Such a procedure will, perhaps unnecessarily, stimulate rumors and doubts and distrub some people. Yet there seems to be no other course if we want to be sure that we know as much as we can about what happened on Nov. 22, 1963."

Mr. Goodwin, a 34-year-old graduate of Harvard Law School, said yesterday that he believed the independent group he proposed should be supported by Congress.

"If it finds that further investigation is necessary, a larger commission could be set up by Congressional resolution," he said.

That larger commission should include on its staff persons trained to investigate and "scientific experts able to evaluate ballistics and medical evidence, and look at movie frames," Mr. Goodwin said.

He said:

"Few or none of the staff of the Warren Commission had experience in going out and digging up facts as investigators or reporters would.

"I don't want to make the same mistake about the Epstein book that people made about the Warren report, thinking it must be right because it sounds right."

He said, however, that "it's a fairly impressive book."

He said he had discussed his reaction to the book with other associates of the late President "who feel as I do about it." He declined to identify these associates.

J. Lee Rankin, who was chief counsel to the Warren Commission, declined to comment on Mr. Goodwin's proposal. Mr. Rankin, who was Solicitor General during the Eisenhower Administration, is now City Corporation Counsel.